



Football's back, which, in this house, means Saturdays start with coffee and end with me needing something stronger, depending on how the Gamecocks decide to play with my heart that particular week.

I love this team the way you love family you can't pick. Not because the record's earned it lately. We've had more heartbreak than hardware for a good while now, the kind of losses that don't just sting, they specifically design themselves to sting. A blocked kick here, a targeting call there, some freshman quarterback we've never heard of suddenly playing the game of his life against us. And yet every single fall I find myself back on that couch, fully convinced this is the year.

Hope might be the worst word in college football. Everywhere else, hope sounds like a virtue. In this particular context it's more like a preexisting condition. You know better. You've seen the tape from last year, and the year before that, and yet there's some part of you that watches fall camp and thinks, no, this time is different, this time we've got the pieces. And maybe we do. That's the trap of it. Sometimes you're right just often enough to keep believing you're right every time.

I've represented enough people at their lowest moments to know something about the difference between hope and denial. Denial tells you the bad thing isn't real. Hope tells you the bad thing is real and decides to show up anyway. My clients don't get to choose whether they hope for a better outcome. It shows up whether they want it to or not, the same way it shows up in me every August regardless of what happened the November before.

Viktor Frankl wrote that "everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms, to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances." That's a heavy quote to hang on a football team, but I don't think it's wrong. Nobody chooses whether the ref makes the call or the kicker shanks it wide right. What you choose is whether you're back on the couch the following Saturday, fully exposed, heart wide open, ready to get your hopes up all over again for a team that has given you every reason not to.

I'll be there. Same seat, same coffee, same ridiculous conviction that this is the year.

Go Cocks. Lord help us all.

Take care,

Mason

PS: If you ever have questions or need anything, don't hesitate to reach out. I'll be glad to help.